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SENATE BILL 1658 TESTIMONY

**UNITED STATES SENATE
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

BY

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RECONCILIATION PLACE

Mr. Chairman, Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, and members of this distinguished United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. My name is Michael B. Jandreau, Chairman of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, which is located on the west side of the Missouri River in the vicinity of the Big Bend Dam. I have been Tribal Chairman for some twenty-six years and Tribal politics has been interesting and gratifying in many ways.

I am in support of Senate Bill 1658 introduced by our own South Dakota Senator, Tom Daschle. This legislation is for the construction of the Reconciliation Place to be built on the Fort Pierre, South Dakota side of the Missouri River.

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe has been working to develop some of our historical sites along the Missouri River. A while back, the tribe obtained a grant from the federal government, such as the Department of Interior, involving the Lewis and Clark Trails Program for the centennial anniversary celebration in 2004. We have hired consultants with this grant program with background in Parks Planning and Trails Development. All this planning has helped our Tribal Council to understand the importance of preparing for the future of our reservation and tourism development for our tribe.

So now, we are excited about Senator Daschle's legislation, SB 1658. This bill includes an assortment of areas, such as the establishment of the Sioux Nation Supreme Court. I realize that this is a tremendous undertaking for the Sioux Nation, but it must be done because with my experience with the Tribal Court System, it needs help. As the Tribal Court caseload has increased over the years, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe has joined with other tribes in trying to establish a Tribal Appellate Court System. We need a higher court to which our Tribal Court judges can refer complex cases because of their effect on other tribes regardless of how the legal circumstances are viewed. It is time for other Indian reservation court systems including the tribes, to come together and discuss the Sioux Nation Supreme Court System. We must work to improve the standards of our tribal courts as our tribal membership is growing and the tribes must be able to deal with the changes. The tribes must legislate better tribal ordinances and tribal codes for the tribal courts to ensure that our Indian people receive a fair deal. There are always problems with law enforcement and the people are always going to complain. On some occasions, the South Dakota

Highway Patrol has been profiling the Lower Brule Sioux Reservation or they have been holding sobriety checks on the perimeters of our Sioux reservations without contacting our tribal police or tribal authorities. There needs to be improved communication between tribal and state law enforcement to improve relations between our governments. That is the reason that establishment of the Sioux Nation Supreme Court is so very important to all the people in the state of South Dakota. The Wakpa Sica Historical Society has received a small grant from the Department of Justice to study the feasibility of establishing a Sioux Nation Supreme Court. Right now, Indian people are not being tried by their peers; they are instead being tried by courts in Rapid City, Sioux Falls, and other towns around the state of South Dakota. We read every day in the newspapers about our Indian people being sent to prison after receiving the maximum sentences allowed under state and federal law. The importance of a Sioux Nation Supreme Court is vital to our existence as sovereign tribal nations because in order to continue development, we must make changes in our laws to meet those changes.

In Senate Bill 1658, the Reconciliation Place has many facets included in it that are historical in nature. The Sioux Indians are a very intricate part of plains history that will be displayed in the museum, such as artifacts, clothing, old tools, blankets, moccasins from different tribes, war clubs, dance sticks, Indian women buckskin dresses, men's buckskin outfits, ghost shirts from our ancestors, buffalo bone soup utensils, wacipi dance outfits, pictures of old timers, maps of Indian trails, and many other Indian artifacts that will be available from the tribes. This will be the first tribal museum in the country and the Indian people will have an opportunity to provide input on how the heritage of the Sioux people is presented.

This museum will be a real tribute to the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota culture. The Sioux people have been given little opportunity to be involved in a project of this magnitude because our people have been held back by the dominant society. We are not a people to be feared or even mistreated. Our people are good people with a big heart that will keep on giving. Tourists will find many interesting parts to the museum because the tribes will take great patience and care to help the curators of the museum plan the displays of our Indian ancestors. This will be a first class museum for the traveling tourist to see while making their way across the plains to the Black Hills.

The theater is an important part of the cultural complex because it will provide an opportunity for our people to speak to the general public about their history. Many Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota speaking people can demonstrate on stage how the Sioux language was used in our culture. There will be many lectures discussing Indian history and other professional people presenting their views of how American history developed on the Great Plains. There will also

be presented, other kinds of Indian Arts such as Indian plays that will be of general interest to the public.

The Story Circle will be mostly for children of all races and cultures. There will be presenters from the Indian culture who have an education in specific areas that will be available in different dances and others who can demonstrate their skills in singing. We will want the singers drumming their songs to all the children so they will know the words behind the songs. Demonstrations of all types will be available by Indian artists, who will provide Indian storytelling to the children. Of course, we will want the spiritual Indian leaders to explain why prayers are so important to the cultures.

The Repatriation Center is a vital part of how the Sioux Nation lived and survived on the Great Plains. There are artifacts from the Sioux people that were taken to all parts of the world to be put on display. Museums in Europe have many types of Indian artifacts and other items stored in their homes that we may never see again. It will be difficult to obtain all those items without help from the federal government, but everything takes time to accomplish. The tribes will have an opportunity to decide where some of these items belong and which tribe has ownership for repatriation back to the reservation. Many of these items are ceremonial in nature and tribes must take great pains to sort them out. Of course, Indian artifacts readily identifiable must go to the tribe directly because we want this Repatriation Center to be a model workplace that coordinates with other tribes. The tribes will use the Repatriation Center to meet and discuss the problems of how to discover where these items belong. The storage place for all these items will be temperature controlled to protect the artifacts from any damage. The Sioux Nation does not have an organization to deal with the repatriation of artifacts, but they are in agreement with each of the tribes to work together.

The Genealogical Center is a place where the Indian people can come to research their family tree and find out their family background. We have Indian as well as non-Indian people trying to discover their family histories because individuals from Europe came to this country and married Indian women. The children of those parents went on to marry back into their own race and all ties to the Indian people were lost. Many people from all types of communities are interested in the development of the Genealogical Center because just maybe, they are in some way related to the Sioux people. Other individuals are looking to find out if they can be enrolled in some tribe because their ancestor was married to an Indian person. There are so many interesting opportunities available through the Reconciliation Place legislation that it will take a good staff to meet all the demands of the general public.

The Gift Shop has many opportunities for our Indian people trying to market their arts and crafts to the general public touring the country. Every item will be labeled Indian-made because there are foreign made items on the

market. Every Sioux tribe will be able to display their items for sale at the gift shop. We want our Indian people to have the same opportunity as everyone else to make a living.

Meeting rooms are important to Indian Country because we have so many meetings, conferences, training sessions, planning meetings, and other kinds of developmental projects going on with the tribes. Many times tribes will convene special meetings to work out problems away from the distractions on the reservations.

Office space for the Wakpa Sica Historical Society is necessary to keep abreast of all their activities around the state. They will have membership drives to promote the organization and promotional activities.

The United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota Development Corporation, Inc. will have office space to continue their work with all the tribes in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Our purpose is economic development although, we are involved to some extent with Indian Education, Planning, Health, Employment Assistance, Training, and Contracting.

Senate Bill 1658 includes the Economic Development Council in its legislation and this is an area that is important to the growth and development of the Indian tribes. Sometime ago, the Bureau of Indian Affairs promised the tribes 6 Economic Development Centers around the country and of course, we never saw anything. The Sioux were promised an Economic Development Center to be established in Rapid City, South Dakota. The resources are necessary to learn new things and put together business packages for individuals trying to establish a business.

I would like to thank the United States Senate Indian Affairs Committee for listening to my comments today.